

MASSACHUSETTS FISHING & HUNTING



For more information on sporting laws and regulations, please refer to the 2023 *Massachusetts Guide* online at www.mass.gov/masswildlife or pick up a copy at sporting license vendor locations across the state.



FISHING SEASONS AND LIMITS

SPECIES	OPEN SEASON (ALL DATES INCLUSIVE)	DAILY CREEL LIMIT	MINIMUM LENGTH ¹
Trout²			
Lakes, ponds, major rivers ^{3, 5, 6}	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	3	—
Housatonic River ⁴	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	1	20"
All other rivers and brooks	Apr. 1 – Sept. 10	8	—
	Sept. 11 – Mar. 31, 2024	3	—
Lake Trout			
Wachusett Reservoir ⁶	(see note 6)	3	—
Quabbin Reservoir ⁶	(see note 6)	2	18"
Landlocked Salmon⁶	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	2	15"
American Shad⁷ (Connecticut and Merrimack rivers only, including their tributaries.)	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	3	—
Chain Pickerel	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	5	15"
Black Bass (Largemouth and Smallmouth, singly or combined):	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	5	12"
Northern Pike	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	1	28"
Tiger Muskellunge	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	1	28"
Walleye	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	5	14"
Smelt⁸	Jan. 1 – Feb. 28	—	—
	May 16 – Dec. 31	—	—
All Other Freshwater Species⁹	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	—	—
Striped Bass and Herring: For season, size, and possession limits call the Division of Marine Fisheries at (617) 626-1520, or visit mass.gov/marinefisheries .			
Possession of: Sturgeon (all species), American Brook Lamprey, Atlantic (sea-run) Salmon, Bridle Shiner, Burbot, Eastern Silvery Minnow, Lake Chub, Longnose Sucker, and Northern Redbelly Dace is illegal! If caught, release immediately. This means remove hook or cut line and return fish to water immediately — do not pose for photographs, place on a stringer, hold in a net, or delay in any way the immediate return and release of these rare fish to the water!			

1 Minimum length is measured as the straight line (not curved over the body) from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail. The tips of any forked tail may be squeezed together for the final measurement.

2 Trout applies to Brook, Brown, Rainbow, and Tiger Trout (a cross between a female Brown and a male Brook Trout). From Apr. 1 to Sept. 10, no more than 8 trout (as defined) may be taken daily, and only 3 of those trout may be from lakes, ponds, or major rivers. From Sept. 11 to Mar. 31, no more than 3 trout (as defined) may be taken daily.

3 Major Rivers: Childs, Coonamessett, Deerfield, Farmington, Green (Colrain), Green (Great Barrington), Ipswich, Jones, Mashpee, Millers, Nissitissit, North (Colrain), North (West Branch), Parker, Quaboag, Quinapoxet, Quinebaug, Seven Mile, Santuit, Scorton Creek, Shawsheen, Squannacook, Stillwater (Sterling, Princeton), Swift (East Branch), Swift (Winsor Dam to Ware River, except as posted), Tully (East and West Branches), Ware, Ware (East Branch), Westfield (all branches).

4 Mainstem Housatonic only, from the confluence of the East and West Branches to the MA-CT line, exclusive of the catch-and-release areas where no trout may be kept.

5 Special Brown Trout water: South Pond (Quacumquasit), Brookfield. Total daily creel is 3 trout but only 1 may be a Brown Trout and it must be at least 15".

6 Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs: Opening and closing dates are set by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The Quabbin Reservoir Fishing Season generally opens on the third Saturday of April and runs through the third Saturday in October, but these dates may be adjusted due to weather and other factors. Quabbin Reservoir and its tributary streams within the Quabbin Reservation are closed to all fishing except during the open season as set by DCR. The Quabbin Fishing Guide is available at: mass.gov/dcr/quabbinfish or by calling (413) 323-7221. The Wachusett/Sudbury/West Waushacum fishing season normally opens the first Saturday in April and closes November 30, but the DCR/DWSP may alter those dates depending on ice conditions. At Wachusett Reservoir, shoreline fishing only is allowed from Gate 6 on Route 70 to Gate 36 on Route 110. A Wachusett and Sudbury Reservoir Fishing Guide is available at: mass.gov/dcr/wachusettfish or by calling (508) 792-7806.

7 American Shad are Catch-and-Release ONLY on all waters except the Connecticut and Merrimack rivers, including their tributaries.

8 Smelt may be taken by hook and line only.

9 Excluding the state- and federally-listed species listed after the "Possession of:" heading in the bottom row of the table shown above.

FREE FISHING WEEKEND

June 3–4, 2023
No freshwater license needed!



Photo by John Gutzeit/MassWildlife

HUNTING SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS

NO HUNTING ON SUNDAY

		OPEN SEASON (ALL DATES INCLUSIVE)	DAILY BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	ANNUAL LIMIT
DEER					
	Youth Deer Hunt Day	Sept. 30, 2023	See full regulations for more information.	1 antlered deer statewide OR antlerless deer in the Wildlife Management Zone(s) specified on the permit.	
Deer (Big Game)	Archery	Zones 10–14: Oct. 2 – Nov. 25, 2023 Zones 1–9: Oct. 16 – Nov. 25, 2023	See full regulations for more information.	2 antlered deer + antlerless deer by permit	
	Paralegic	Nov. 2 – Nov. 4, 2023			
	Shotgun	Nov. 27 – Dec. 9, 2023			
	Primitive Firearms	Dec. 11 – Dec. 30, 2023			
BLACK BEAR					
Black Bear (Big Game)	Zones 1–14	Sept. 5 – Sept. 23, 2023 Nov. 6 – Nov. 25, 2023 Nov. 27 – Dec. 9, 2023	See full regulations for more information.		1
UPLAND GAME BIRDS*					
Crow	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Apr. 10, 2023 and July 1, 2023 – Apr. 10, 2024 (M, F, Sat only)	—	—	—
Pheasant	Youth Hunt Zones 1–14	Sept. 2, 9, 16, 23, and Oct. 7, 2023 Oct. 14 – Dec. 30, 2023	2	4	No limit
Quail	Zones 11–14	Oct. 14 – Dec. 30, 2023	4	8	No limit
Ruffed Grouse	Zones 1–14	Oct. 14 – Nov. 25, 2023	3	6	15
Wild Turkey (Big Game)	Youth Hunt: Zones 1–13 Spring: Zones 1–13 Fall: Zones 10–13*** Fall: Zones 1–9***	April 22, 2023 (special restrictions apply**) April 24 – May 20, 2023 Oct. 2 – Nov. 25, 2023 Oct. 16 – Nov. 25, 2023	See full regulations for more information.		

* Crow, pheasant, and quail hunting are closed during shotgun deer season. Migratory game birds (includes waterfowl, woodcock, snipe, rails): Seasons and bag limits set annually. For Migratory Game Bird Regulations visit mass.gov/migratory-game-bird.

** Must have completed the Youth Turkey Hunt program.

*** Shotgun, muzzleloading shotgun, and archery from Oct. 16 – 28, 2023.

RABBIT, HARE & SQUIRREL					
Cottontail Rabbit	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2, 2023 – Feb. 28, 2023 Oct. 14, 2023 – Feb. 29, 2024	5	10	—
Snowshoe Hare	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2, 2023 – Feb. 28, 2023 Oct. 14, 2023 – Feb. 29, 2024	2	4	—
Gray Squirrel	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2, 2023 – Feb. 28, 2023 Sept. 5, 2023 – Feb. 29, 2024	5	10	—

Rabbit, hare, and squirrel hunting are closed during shotgun deer season.

FURBEARERS					
Bobcat	Zones 1–8	Jan. 2 – Mar. 8, 2023 and Dec. 20, 2023 – Mar. 8, 2024	—	—	—
Coyote	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Mar. 8, 2023 and Oct. 14, 2023 – Mar. 8, 2024	—	—	—
Fox (red or gray)	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Feb. 28, 2023 and Nov. 1, 2023 – Feb. 29, 2024	—	—	—
Opossum	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Jan. 31, 2023 and Oct. 2, 2023 – Jan. 31, 2024	—	—	—
Raccoon	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Jan. 31, 2023 and Oct. 2, 2023 – Jan. 31, 2024	3	See full regulations for more information.	

All furbearer hunting seasons are closed during shotgun deer season, except for coyotes. Special restrictions apply.

The following species may be taken year-round (except during shotgun deer season) by licensed hunters with no daily or seasonal bag limit: English sparrow, flying squirrel, red squirrel, chipmunk, porcupine, skunk, starling, weasel, woodchuck.

Falconers may hunt pheasant, bobwhite quail, ruffed grouse, cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, and gray squirrel from the respective opening day through March 15th.

FURBEARER TRAPPING

		OPEN SEASON (ALL DATES INCLUSIVE)
Beaver ¹		Jan. 1 – April 15, 2023 and Nov. 1, 2023 – April 15, 2024
Bobcat ^{1,2} , Coyote ¹ , Fox ¹ , Weasel		Nov. 1 – Nov. 30, 2023
Fisher ¹		Nov. 1 – Nov. 22, 2023
Mink ¹ , River Otter ¹		Nov. 1 – Dec. 15, 2023
Muskrat, Opossum, Raccoon, Skunk		Jan. 1 – Feb. 28, 2023 and Nov. 1, 2023 – Feb. 29, 2024

1 – Pelt checking/reporting required.

2 – Bobcats may only be trapped or salvaged in Wildlife Management Zones 1–8.



**TO REPORT VIOLATIONS
(800) 632-8075**

www.mass.gov/ole